

THE RISE OF

SNEAKER CULTURE



DEC. 3, 2015–FEB. 28, 2016
SNEAKERS.TOLEDOMUSEUM.ORG

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#sneakerculture

Sneakers are worn by millions of people worldwide and seem to transcend gender, age, and social and economic position. Yet the broad category of “sneaker” contains a minefield of meaning, full of cultural significance. Although sneakers might appear to be democratic, not all are created equal, as the rise of sneaker culture demonstrates.

How have some sneakers come to be valued more highly than others? How have sneakers expressed both privilege and inclusion? How were specialized sports shoes transformed into staples of street fashion and, in turn, accessories central to expressions of masculinity? How is it that at a single glance, a pair of sneakers can reveal nuanced social information?

The answers to these questions—embedded in the long history of sneaker culture—are intertwined with compelling stories about continuity and change, the relentless pursuit of the new and the innovative, and the shifting politics of inclusion and exclusion.

The Rise of Sneaker Culture is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Bata Shoe Museum. The exhibition is curated by Elizabeth Semmelhack, Senior Curator of the Bata Shoe Museum.

Generous support for the national tour of the exhibition is provided by Macy's.



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***The Rise of Sneaker Culture* is organized into six sections:**

INNOVATION

Today's top sneaker designers seek out new materials, new technologies, and new perspectives in an effort to meet the diverse and nuanced needs of elite athletes. In turn, these advanced designs find a wider audience in the general public.



RUBBER REVOLUTION

In 1839 the development of vulcanization turned rubber into a durable material, paving the way for the modern sneaker. By the late 1800s, increased prosperity led to increased pursuit of leisure activities, which called for specialized footwear.



THE BODY POLITIC

After World War I, an emphasis on the pursuit of physical fitness and beauty coincided with unsettling ideologies that stressed physical perfection and racial purity. Ironically, it was in this period of the “politics of perfection” that the sneaker emerged as one of the most democratic forms of footwear.



FASHIONING FITNESS

The fitness craze of the 1970s again elevated the sneaker as a means of conveying social status. Expensive sneakers with colorful uppers, prominent logos, and cutting-edge innovations were quickly embraced.



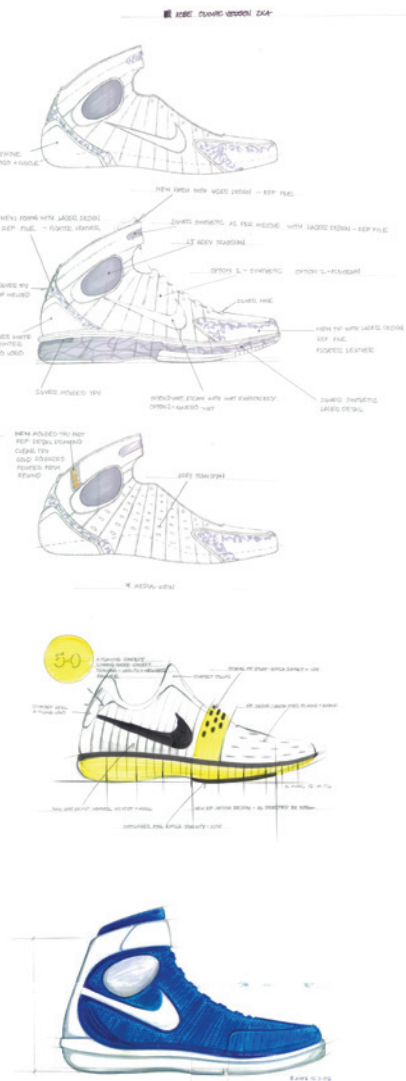
AIR JORDANS I-XX3

Nike signed NBA star Michael Jordan in 1984 and released the first Air Jordan the following year. Since then, Air Jordans have revolutionized the sneaker industry and are now one of the most iconic shoes in history.



FRESH

Since the 1980s, the synergy between sneakers, urban culture, music, and basketball has transformed sneakers into objects of desire and centerpieces of men's fashion.



FREE PROGRAMS



Lecture | Van Monroe on *Creating Outside the Box*
Thursday, Dec. 3: 7 P.M. | Little Theater

Acclaimed artist Van Monroe will talk about the genesis and growth of the custom sneaker art culture, how custom designers have influenced major sneaker manufacturers to change their business model, and how he carved his own lane in the industry.

It's Friday! Music | *Beats: Out of the Box*
Friday, Dec. 4: 6:30 P.M. | GlasSalon

Join us for a look at contemporary hip hop production in Detroit and Chicago featuring CÖS, Tewz, Pastel Arsenal, Doc Illingsworth, and Sev Seveer with live visuals by Asha Tamirisa. The event is organized by Toledo musician/producer Ben Cohen.

Exhibition Talk | Curator Halona Norton-Westbrook on *The Rise of Sneaker Culture*
Saturday, Dec. 5: 2 P.M. | Levis Gallery

Put on your favorite sneakers and join Associate Curator of Contemporary Art Halona Norton-Westbrook for a tour of *The Rise of Sneaker Culture*.

Exhibition Celebration | *The Rise of Sneaker Culture*
Saturday, Jan. 2: 6–10 P.M. | Main Museum

Put on your best sneakers and celebrate *The Rise of Sneaker Culture* with this winter bash featuring DJs, dance, and dessert.

Interactive Fashion Show | *Build Your Outfit*
Thursday, Jan. 7: 7 P.M. | Levis Gallery

Pull together your finest shoe-to-cap look and join this audience fashion show. Those who pull together the best looks with their sneakers will be eligible to win prizes.

Lecture | Ben Ewy on *Streets is Watching: Shoes as Status Symbols from the Ancient World to Today*
Saturday, Jan. 16: 2 P.M. | Little Theater

The height of shoes was one way to distinguish gods from mortals in ancient Greek tragedies, and shoes today continue to convey messages about status. Sneaker collector and designer Ben Ewy is director of the Hamilton Way for Carhartt, where he focuses on innovation, research, and development for the global workwear brand. Ewy has taught courses on sneaker culture and brings to this program his insights on 2,500 years of fashion and footwear.



Sunday Family Film Club | *Jumanji*
Sunday, Jan. 17: 2 P.M. | Little Theater

When two kids discover a magical board game, they release a man trapped for decades in it and a host of dangers that can only be stopped by finishing the game. [1995, 104 minutes]

Performance | Hardcore Detroit presents Hip Hop 101
Thursday, Jan. 28: 7 P.M. | Levis Gallery

The performance group Hardcore Detroit sets in motion a non-stop, interactive breakdance battle and introduction to hip-hop dance forms, including popping, locking, jit dance, and more. Hardcore Detroit is a product of the Detroit subculture cultivated through the experiences and vision of designer/dancer Haleem "Stringz" Rasul, winner of a prestigious 2010 Kresge Foundation Artist Fellowship.

Film | *Sneakerheadz*
Thursday, Feb. 4: 7 P.M. | Little Theater

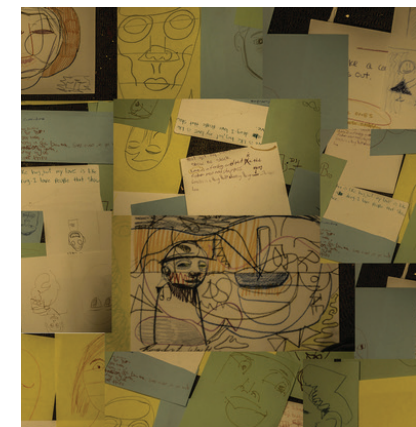
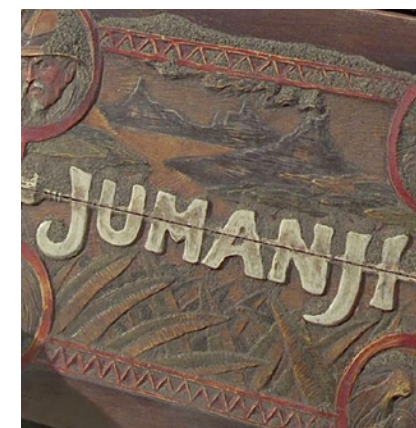
From the shores of California to the streets of Tokyo, the new documentary *Sneakerheadz* examines the cultural influence of sneaker collecting around the world and delves into a subculture whose proud members don't just want to admire art, they want to wear it. *Sneakerheadz* is presented by the Toledo Museum of Art and Toledo.com. [2015, 73 minutes]

Performance | Radiant City Arts and Toledo Public Schools present *Radiant Sole – 100 Feet and Rising*
Saturday, Feb. 20: 2 P.M. | Levis Gallery

Teens from Toledo Public Schools, in collaboration with Radiant City Arts, showcase their wide-reaching talents with a program that includes dance-offs, beat battles, poetry slams, and visual art in a celebration of the diversity of hip-hop culture and the creative process. Radiant City Arts is an arts education provider specializing in music, poetry, and visual arts workshops with a focus on developing leadership skills and self-empowerment. It was founded by visual artist Yusuf Lateef, musician/producer Ben Cohen, and poet/educator Akili Jackson in 2013.

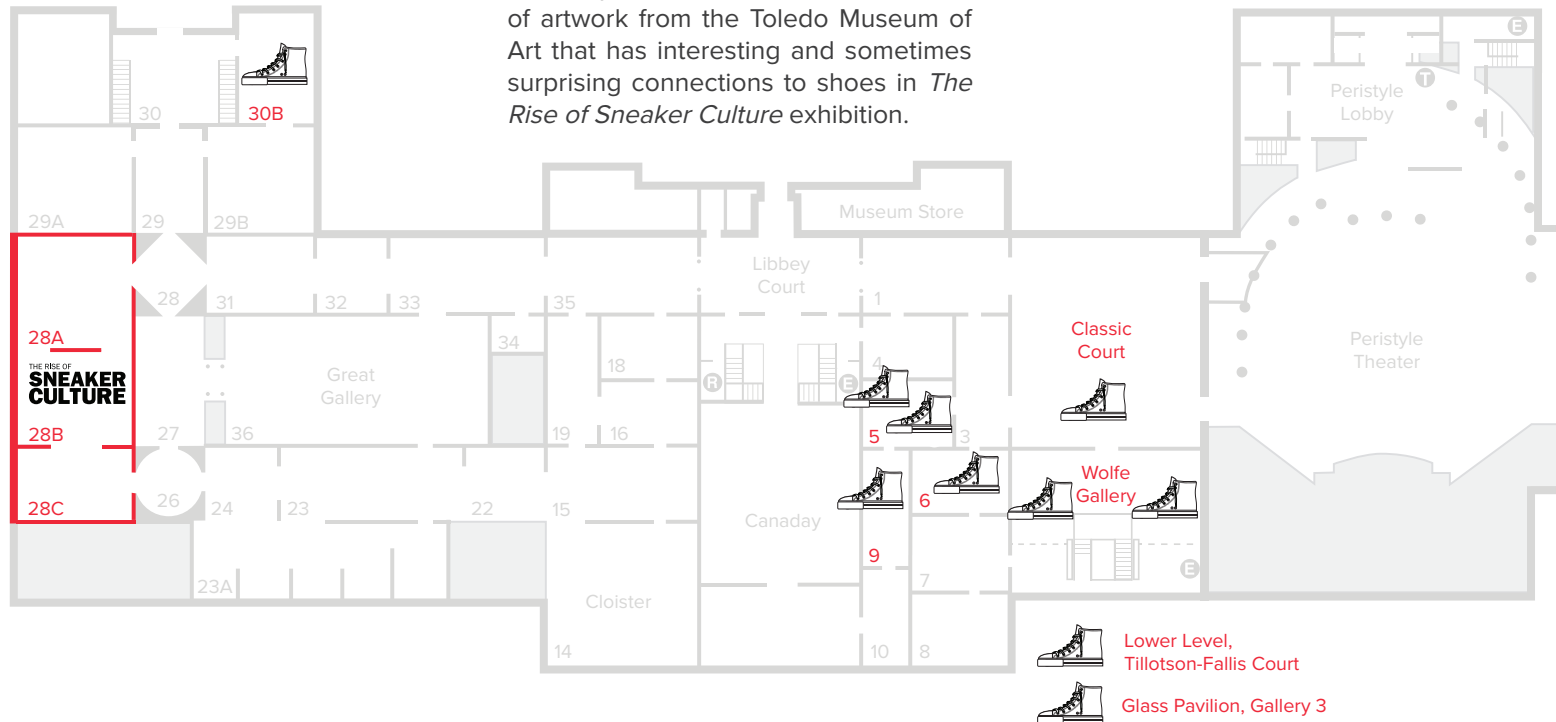
Lecture | Erin O. Patton on *Hip-Hop, Innovation, and the Rise of Sneaker Culture*
Thursday, Feb. 25: 7 P.M. | Little Theater

From the tricked-out cars they drive, technology they adopt, and sneaker brands they wear to the beverages they drink, music they listen to, and language they speak, the hip-hop generation has had a profound impact on brands, sports, and popular culture. Author Erin Patton traces his own journey as a product of hip-hop's Generation X and provides a front-row perspective as the early architect of Nike's Jordan brand.



PERFECT PAIRS: SNEAKERS + ART

Put on your sneakers and take a tour of artwork from the Toledo Museum of Art that has interesting and sometimes surprising connections to shoes in *The Rise of Sneaker Culture* exhibition.



Pictured below from left to right:

Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Victory*, 1902 (modeled). **Gallery 30B**, 1986.34

Henri Matisse, *Apollo*, 1953.
Tillotson-Fallis Court, 1983.40

Ludwig Kny, *Butterflies Vase*, about 1900–1910.
Glass Pavilion, Gallery 3, 1986.61

Harold Edgerton, *Football Kick*, 1938.
Gallery 5, 1996.30A

Jacob Lawrence, *Barber Shop*, 1946.
Gallery 5, 1975.15

Kehinde Wiley, *Saint Francis of Paola*, 2013.
Gallery 9, 2005.290

Greece, from Athens, *Panathenaic Prize Amphora*, about 490 BCE.
Classic Court, 1961.24

Mary Sibande, *Rubber Soul, Monument of Aspiration*, 2011. **Wolfe Gallery**, 2013.160

R.B. Kitaj, *Notes Toward a Definition of Nobody – A Reverie*, 1961. **Wolfe Gallery**, 1973.42

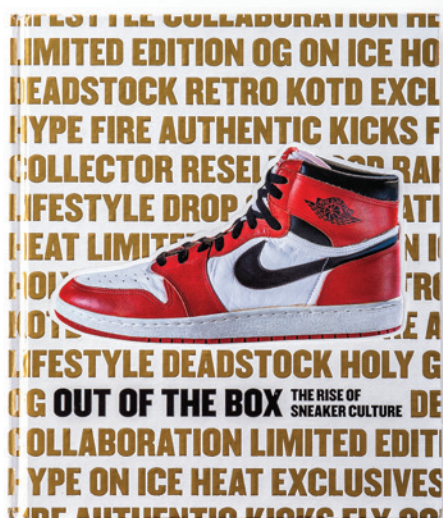
Roy Lichtenstein, *Sweet Dreams, Baby!*, 1966.
Gallery 6, 1971.156





EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Out of the Box: The Rise of Sneaker Culture showcases sneakers, from the mid-19th century to sports performance breakthroughs, to present-day cultural icons. Drawn from the collection of the Bata Shoe Museum and significant private collectors, museums, and archives, this selection is richly contextualized with interviews and essays by design innovators, sneaker collectors, and cultural historians, creating a backdrop of the technical innovation, fashion trends, social history, and marketing campaigns that shaped the form over the past two centuries. TMAstore.org



Cover and back page: Nike, *Air Jordan I*, 1985. Nike Archives. Photo: Ron Wood, courtesy American Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum. **Page 2:** Eric Avar, Design sketches of Air Zoom Huarache and Nike Free 5.0, 2002, Nike Archives. **Page 3:** (From top to bottom) Nike, *Foamposite*, 1997. Nike Archives. Photo: Ron Wood, courtesy American Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum; Thomas Dutton and Thorowgood, *Running Shoe*, 1860–65. Northampton Museums and Art Gallery. Photo: Greg Washington, courtesy American Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum; Converse, *Gripper*, late 1940s–early 1950s, Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum. Photo: Ron Wood, courtesy American Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum.; Nike, *Waffle Trainer*, 1974. Northampton Museums and Art Gallery. Photo: Ron Wood, courtesy American Federation of Arts/ Bata Shoe Museum; Nike, *Air Jordan I*, 1985. Nike Archives. Photo: Ron Wood, courtesy American Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum; Louis Vuitton x Kanye West, *Don*, 2009. Private Collection. Photo: Ron Wood, courtesy American Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum. **Page 4:** (Top to bottom) Nike x Supreme, *Dunk High Pro SB*, 2003. Collection of Sheraz Amin. Photo: Ron Wood, courtesy American Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum; Ben Ewy of Carhartt.

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